MIT's Oldest and Largest Newspaper

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The Tech
Established 1881

Volume 141, Number 16

Thursday, August 5, 2021

WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 71°F | 65°F
Heavy Rain And Fog.

FRI: 82°F | 67°F
Sunny.

SAT: 84°F | 68°F
Partly Sunny

JASON ZHAO

An empty Stratton Student Center awaits students' return for a fully in-person fall semester.

Melissa Nobles, Dean of SHASS, set to assume Chancellor position August 18

Nobles describes new role in three words: all things students; anticipates student input on upcoming initiatives of Task Force 2021 and Beyond

By Srinidhi Narayanan
NEWS EDITOR

Melissa Nobles will serve as MIT's next chancellor, effective August 18, President L. Rafael Reif announced earlier in the summer. Nobles joined the MIT faculty in 1995 as a political science professor. She later served as head of the Political Science department, and as Dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS).

She succeeds Dr. Cynthia Barnhart SM '86, PhD '88, who stepped down from the role July 1.

The Tech spoke with Nobles over Zoom about her background, priorities as Chancellor, and plans to integrate student voice into Chancellor's initiatives. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

The Tech: Please describe your background and your time as a professor and as SHASS Dean.

Melissa Nobles: My interests in politics and the public arena started from an early age. I served as class president for three years in high school in New Rochelle, New York, right outside of New York City. Both of my parents were born and raised in the American South, and attended schools that were racially segregated by law; my brother and I benefited from the post-civil rights movement, and had a different experience. We grew up in a diverse setting, and one in which we experienced levels of freedom that my parents couldn't have imagined.

I was able to pursue my passion for politics and how it relates to race in my undergraduate years at Brown and later, through my doctoral studies at Yale, I became immersed in the racial politics of Brazil. These research experiences shaped my academic trajectory, which is focused on shedding light on questions that are understudied and arguably, have been, until very recently, undervalued by academic disciplines. I joined the MIT faculty in 1995, first as a professor in the political science department, and later as head of the department, and finally as the Dean of SHASS. What brought me to MIT and has kept me here is my growing and deep appreciation for our community's dedication to excellence in research and teaching.

When I was dean, I wanted to really be able to explore that even

Chancellor, Page 3

IN SHORT

Aug. 16–17 is the **summer session final exam period.**

Move-in for **first-year pre-orientation programs** is Aug. 24.

Continuing students must **preregister for classes** by 5 p.m. on Aug. 26.

First-year move-in is Aug. 28, and **move-in for sophomores** participating in REX is Aug. 29–30.

First-year orientation will begin Aug. 29.

Faculty, students, and staff should report their **vaccine status** at *covidvaccine.mit.edu.*

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Send news and tips to *news@tech.mit.edu.*

Students and administrators speak about face covering, testing, vaccination policies at July 28 student session

Students will not be required to quarantine upon arrival, face coverings will be required

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson hosted a student life conversation session over Zoom July 28 to discuss and answer questions about returning to campus in the fall. Also present at the session were Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz and Director of MIT Medical Cecilia Stuopis '90.

In contrast to Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, students arriving on campus will not be required to quarantine for one week, Waitz said during the session. MIT will instead emphasize vaccinations and provide vaccinations to those who are not yet vaccinated, in addition to establishing an entry testing protocol, requiring face coverings indoors, and continuing to require attestations.

Waitz also said that due to limited access to vaccines and exemptions for medical or religious reasons, there would be "100 or perhaps more" students in shared housing arriving to campus unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or vaccinated with a vaccine not recognized by the World Health Organization. Waitz added that as of July 28, "about 1,000" students had yet to report their vaccination status to MIT.

Stuopis reported during the session that MIT had seen an increase in positive COVID-19 tests since the Independence Day holiday, including breakthrough cases (positive COVID-19 tests from fully vaccinated individuals). MIT's COVID-19 dashboard recorded 37 positive tests (0.09% positive rate) in July, an increase from three (0.01% positive rate) in June. In the first four days of August, the dashboard recorded 10 positive tests (0.13% positive rate).

Stuopis said that in order to monitor potential cases, students will be asked to test three times in their first week on campus: upon arrival, on day four, and on day seven. They will also be prompted to submit attestations daily through the COVID Pass app.

Unvaccinated students will be offered Johnson & Johnson or Pfizer vaccines upon arrival by their second day on campus. Vaccine clinics will take place at MIT Medical on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays beginning Aug. 9.

Face coverings will be required in all campus buildings in the fall, with some exceptions. Exceptions include for faculty and instructional staff while teaching, students when alone in residential common areas or in their rooms, employees when alone in their work spaces, and anyone while eating or drinking. MIT will regularly reevaluate its face covering policy once the fall semester is underway.

Policies, Page 3

NEW MUSIC BUILDING
Construction for a new music building next to the Kresge Auditorium is underway. **NEWS, p. 2**

CHANCELLOR NOBLES
New Chancellor outlines goals and plans for student engagement. **NEWS, p. 3**

FALL RESIDENTIAL POLICIES
Face coverings will be required indoors initially this fall. **NEWS, p. 3**

XKCD
Flawed Data. **FUN, p. 4**

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WEATHER

Rain on me (or don't)

By Phoebe Lin
STAFF METEOROLOGIST

Flash flood watches are in effect in Cambridge! A string of storms is set to dump up to three inches of rain on Boston in the next couple of days. If you live near streams or urban locations, watch out for flooding and try to move to higher ground if you spot rising water. Don't try to drive through flooded roads! (As they say, if you jump in muddy puddles, you must wear your boots.)

Meanwhile, wildfires continue to scorch California and parts of Europe, accompanying the drought in almost half the U.S. Heatwaves are giving us lots of ripe fruits this weekend, but they foreshadow more dangerous conditions to come. I've only seen rain in my Animal Crossing town. Anyone have a petal parasol to spare?

Extended Forecast

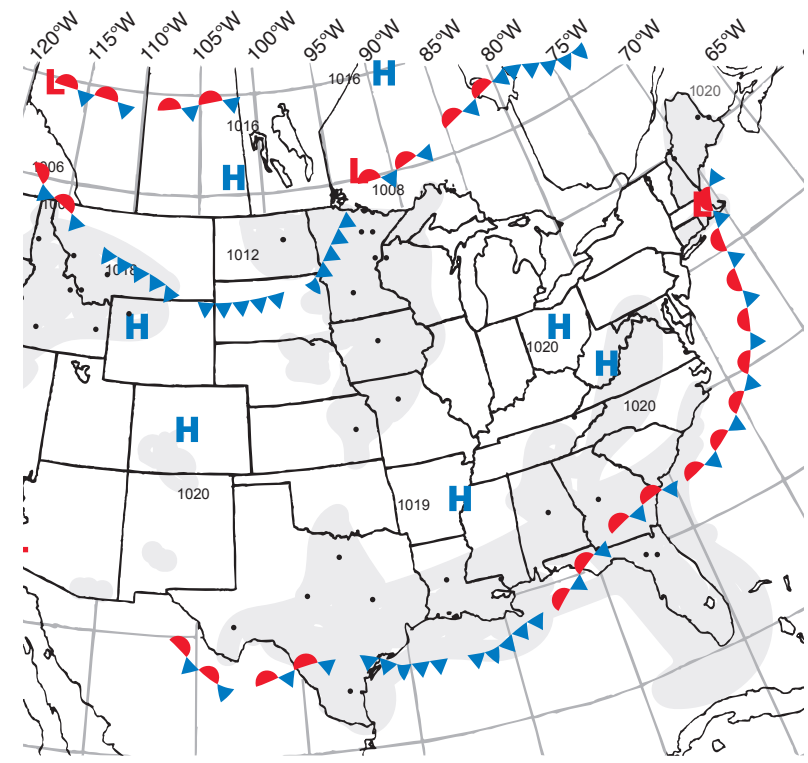
Today: Heavy rain and patchy fog, then chance showers. High around 71°F (22°C). Northeast wind at 8–13 mph. A half to a three quarters of an inch of rain possible.

Tonight: Chance showers; mostly cloudy with a low around 65°F (18°C). Northeast wind around 6 mph turning west.

Tomorrow: Sunny, with a high around 82°F (28°C) and a low around 67°F (19°C). Winds west and then south, around 7 mph.

Saturday: Partly sunny, then mostly cloudy, with a high around 84°F (29°C) and low around 68°F (20°C).

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high around 81°F (27°C) and low around 67°F (19°C).



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, August 5, 2021

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols			Other Symbols
H High Pressure	Trough		Snow	Rain	Fog
L Low Pressure	Warm Front	Showers	✻ ▽	• ▽	Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	Cold Front	Light	✻	•	Haze
	Stationary Front	Moderate	✻✻	••	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and *The Tech*
		Heavy	⁂	∴	

New Music Building construction underway, to be completed in 2024

Preparation for the construction of MIT's new Music Building began in June and took place during the summer. According to the Capital Projects website, the building has a target completion date of 2024.

The website writes that the new building will be constructed to support MIT's conservatory-level music program, the large number of students enrolling in music courses at the Institute, and ensemble and chamber groups on campus.

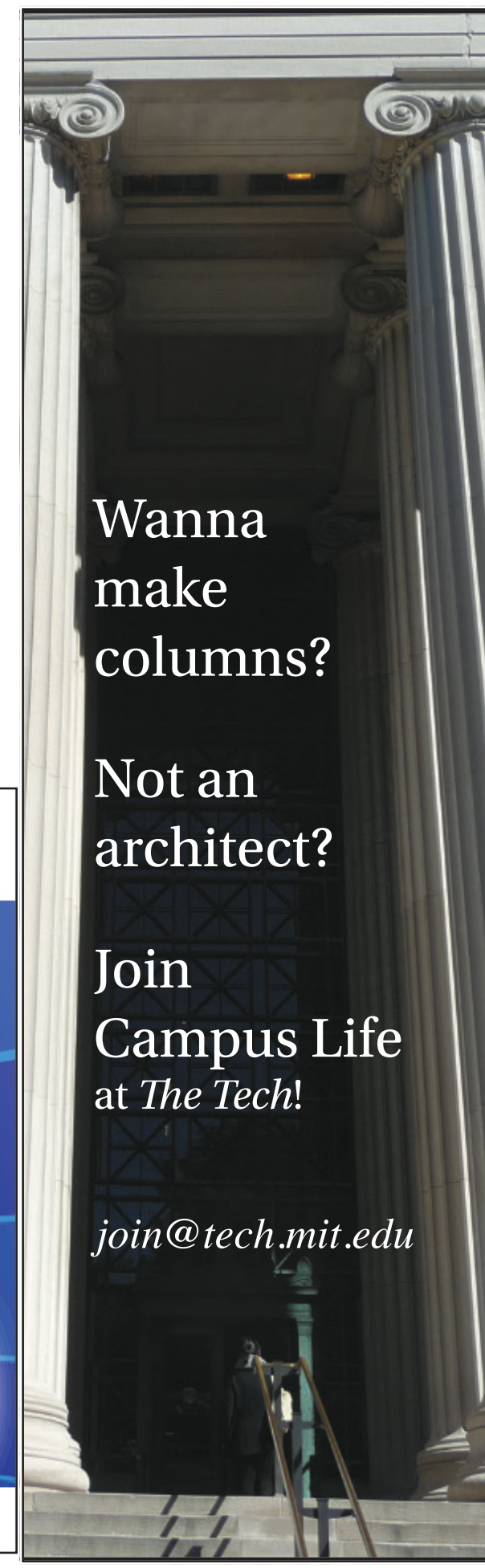
The building will have "spaces for performance, rehearsal, professional-level recording, research, and instruction, as well as a large-scale, purpose-built performance lab that will enable experimentation with various formats," the website writes.

The construction of the building is expected to include "acoustical design elements for optimal listening, playing, and recording."

The new building will be directly adjacent to the Kresge Auditorium, replacing its parking lot, and have building number W18. Site preparation and tree removal took place during the summer, and demolition of the parking lot and surrounding area, along with excavation for the new building's garage, will begin in the fall.

The website adds that the building's location near the Kresge Auditorium, Johnson Athletic Center, Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center, Stratton Student Center, and many undergraduate dormitories will allow it to "contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of MIT's evolving West Campus sector."

— Kristina Chen



Nobles: A 'way to effect change is to keep the lines of communication open'

Chancellor, from Page 1

further by helping to set up a Digital Humanities Lab, which is a way of getting students involved with STEM and humanities. I've also been involved in the creation of not only the new theatre building but the upcoming music building, as well as the MIT and Slavery research class.

TT: Can you give a quick description of your job as chancellor? How do you see your role?

Nobles: I can sum it up in three words: all things students. All things students means thinking about the whole student experience; from working with Vice Chancellor Waitz — we get the academic side of student life — and working with Dean Suzy Nelson — we get the residential life side. So all aspects of student existence matter to me for both graduate and undergraduate students. I see myself as the person who has an important role in understanding what students want and need, and being an honest broker, player, and officer.

TT: Are there specific initiatives you're excited about undertaking as soon as you begin your term? What will you focus on on day one?

Nobles: In the Chancellor's Office, we get to focus on the student experience inside and outside of the classroom, and we can help students grow into their whole selves here at MIT. Many aspects of coming to college are captured in the classroom, while there are others which are not. We are interested in making sure that the intersection between those two is enhanced and grows.

There are a couple of things that are in front of us directly; Institute initiatives that come to mind immediately are the DEI Strategic Action Plan, as well as Task Force 2021 and Beyond. Those two things we'll begin working on immediately. Then after that, it will be just getting to know the job. Although I've been a dean, which is one thing, becoming the chancellor is quite another; I'll be coming in and learning about a senior institution in a new way. That's what I expect to be doing on day one.

TT: How do you plan to incorporate student voice into your decision-making? Do you have a framework for this in mind? More precisely, if a student wants to effect change or express an opinion about a Chancellor-led initiative, what is the best way to do this?

Nobles: The main thing is listening. The best way to understand what matters most to students is to be accessible to them and to listen to them. I'm going to reach out and I will be available to students. I have started to set up meetings with student leaders, and I look forward to hearing what's on their minds. There are organized channels and tons of student committees, starting with the graduate and undergraduate associations; these are obvious places I'll reach out to. Students should also reach out to me. I recognize that student voices are heard not only through organized governance, but in residence halls, at student club meetings, in their departments, and at office hours. In those meetings, I will have a chance to get a strong sense of what students care about and we can begin to think about the ways in which student voices are incorporated; so one way to effect change is to keep the lines of communication open.

TT: Are there specific areas or particular issues for which you'd like student feedback?

Nobles: I expect that as I learn more about what students are thinking, there may be certain priorities that jump out to me and jump out to students. Once we identify those common priorities, we can get together and figure out how we can best work towards implementing them. I have some ideas to pose, but we'll have a better idea of common priorities after we collect student data and opinion. A bit more specifically, some things out of Task Force 2021 may require immediate student input. And in the longer term, I would very much benefit from students' perspectives and insights on how to expand the meaning of an MIT education and educate the whole student.

TT: Could you highlight some specifics from Task Force 2021 for which student voice could be useful?

Nobles: One of the things that has come up quite a bit has been issues of space on campus. We found that the Banana Lounge, for example, was a place to casually gather; the bananas were an offering of sorts, kind of an expression of caring for someone. Extrapolating from that, a lot of students were saying they needed more spaces together in a way that wasn't tied to anything other than being together, with a certain randomness about it. People appreciate that you can run into friends or you can meet others. We began to think more creatively about space, gathering not as academic spaces or sleeping spaces, but as gathering spaces.

Another thing that's already come out of those discussions has been thinking about outdoor spaces, and that's really been pushed forward by COVID. So creatively thinking about spaces around campus is one example. We're bringing these issues to the forte, and the it's important for students to think about the campus in terms of how they want to live here.

We also talked a lot about rethinking the curriculum. This isn't necessarily about adding new things in requirements, but it came through very strongly from a lot of students expressing the sentiment that somehow, what they were learning had to be more obvious in its relevance to the world. We called on faculty to think more creatively about their assignments and how problem sets are introduced, the architecture of a problem set. The academic task force looked at that kind of thing.

A third aspect of the task force has to do with advising and mentoring, and having students think more about the student journey.

TT: Have you learned anything from Dr. Barnhart's time as Chancellor? Have you taken lessons from her time, positive or negative?

Nobles: Through a combination of vision, advocacy, and care, Cindy created an incredibly solid foundation that makes it possible for us to address the serious issues we face today. She assembled an extraordinary team and prioritized working with students to bring about positive changes in our culture. From addressing sexual misconduct, prioritizing student wellbeing and mental health, innovating student life and learning, and helping to lead the Institute's response to the pandemic, she's made enduring contributions to our community.

TT: Finally, what does a successful first three months or first six months look like for you? Do you have milestones in mind for gauging your progress and performance?

Nobles: If everything goes as planned, I hope to have a much better sense of landscape of student opinion. I wouldn't want to say too much more than that right now. I want to get a good sense of the groups I'm representing and working with. I take that seriously, and I won't know that until I talk to folks. After six months, if I can say with some confidence that I've heard from these groups and can sum up what I've heard, I will consider myself on the right road.

Kitchens in cook-for-yourself residences to reopen in coming fall semester

Policies, from Page 1

During the summer, students were not required to wear face coverings in their residence halls and FSILGs. The face covering policy will be reinstated in the fall in preparation for the large number of arrivals on campus, though Nelson said "our preference would be that there would not be a mask mandate in your living community."

Students will be asked to sign a compliance agreement prior to arriving on campus. MIT does not plan to have teams in residence halls specifically managing compliance with policies and will instead rely on an honor system. Students who are out of compliance will lose access to non-residential buildings only, not their living community.

Nelson said during the session that undergraduate housing will be at full capacity during the fall and that graduate housing is projected to be at 86% capacity. Fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups (FSILGs) will also be fully open in August, with recruitment to take place in early September. Students living in FSILGs will be required to follow the same COVID-19 policies as those living in on-campus residence halls.

Multiple family members will be permitted to help students move in, provided that they wear face coverings. Students will also be permitted to host overnight guests for up to three days in a seven day period. Guests will be required to wear face coverings indoors.

Dining halls and campus eateries will be open in the fall, likely with reduced seating and options for dine in or take out. Students are encouraged to eat outdoors. Additionally, kitchens in cook for yourself residences will reopen. A kitchen steward training and safe food and beverage service protocols are currently under development.

Student organizations, FSILGs, and residence halls will be permitted to host events with both COVID Pass and non-COVID Pass attendees. Events must be registered beforehand and contact information for attendees must be provided for contact tracing purposes.

Policies for K-12 programs sponsored by student organizations are currently under development.

Nelson added that athletic competitions would resume in line with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Student life conversations sessions will continue to be held during August. Students can fill out an online form to receive email communication about the conversations or access materials from the sessions at an online archive.

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Solution to Goodbye
from page 4

8	9	2	6	5	4	1	7	3
3	5	4	1	7	8	6	2	9
1	6	7	2	9	3	5	4	8
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2	8	9	4	3	1	7	5	6
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9	2	5	3	8	6	4	1	7
7	1	6	5	4	9	8	3	2
4	3	8	7	1	2	9	6	5

Solution to Summer
from page 4

1	3	5	6	2	4
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5	1	3	4	6	2

Solution to Beachwear
from page 4

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